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Vol. 7, Issue 7, February 16, 2011

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Region IV Tests SOARCA Brochure



Region IV tests SOARCA brochure

Region IV recently had a tough test for a new draft brochure describing the agency's State-of-the-Art Reactor Consequence Analyses. Would it satisfy a special group of Regional employees?

Those special employees were the Region's participants in the Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program, who represent young professionals in the nuclear field and who could be expected to be a knowledgeable and critical audience.

The State-of-the-Art Reactor Consequence Analyses project used computer models to simulate some of the severe accidents that can occur at nuclear power plants. Two sites volunteered to participate in the study: Surry, which is a pressurized-water reactor site, and Peach Bottom, which is a boiling-water reactor site.

Dorothy Andreas of the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, who coordinated the efforts to develop the draft brochure, unveiled it to the Region IV NSPDPs then held her breath.

The brochure describes how the project was conducted and the realistic consequences of severe accidents at nuclear power plants. The preliminary findings suggest that severe accidents are rare, and, in many instances, can be mitigated by plant operators. Even in cases where the accident is not mitigated, the consequences are not as severe as suggested by earlier NRC studies. This is a function of the robust design of the plants; improved training, procedures, and equipment; and the improved understanding of severe accident behavior.

One significant challenge of the analyses, however, is communicating the concepts of very low probability events and risk to a broad spectrum of stakeholders, from nuclear engineers to the general public.

The Region IV NSPDPers read the draft brochure and provided feedback that Dorothy can use to ensure that the brochure's message is clear and credible.

The SOARCA project began in 2006. This review provided a good opportunity for the Region IV NSPDPs to be a part of the process.

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Exemptions

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